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COLUMISTS QUOTE SOURCES AS SAYING BUCKLEY AND KILBURN DEAD
WASHINGTON

Columnists Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta say that U.S. intelligence officials have determined that two of six Americans kidnapped in Lebanon died of heart attacks while held captive.

But a State Department spokesman said the government is operating on the assumption that all six hostages are alive.

Anderson and Van Atta reported Thursday that the Central Intelligence Agency had determined hostage William Buckley died last spring in Iran of a heart attack following months of torture by Moslem extremists.

In a subsequent report Friday, the columnists said hostage Peter Kilburn had also died in captivity.

Both reports quoted unidentified intelligence sources.

At the State Department on Friday, spokesman Charles Redman reiterated:

"As we've said many times, operate on the assumption that all six hostages are alive."

Asked what he could say about how the hostages were being treated or where they were held, Redman said:

"Nothing whatsoever. In connection with this story I have no comment."

"I have absolutely nothing concerning that report, and in more general terms, concerning the location of any of the hostages."

Anderson and Van Atta reported that the CIA had determined Buckley, 57, a U.S. Embassy official in Beirut, was taken to Tehran and died in April.

The columnists said Kilburn, a librarian at the American University of Beirut who was kidnapped Dec. 3, 1984, died of a heart attack in captivity. U.S. intelligence officials concluded that Kilburn's death was not the result of torture or abuse, the columnists said.

Kilburn had a history of heart disease and hypertension and had suffered a stroke that had left him paralyzed, the report said.

Although Buckley was listed as the U.S. Embassy's political officer, the columnists reported that he was actually the CIA's station chief in Beirut and had developed information about terrorism in the Middle East before he was kidnapped March 16, 1984, by militant Shiite Moslems.

The columnists report that Buckley was taken to the Bekkaa Valley, a Syrian-controlled section of eastern Lebanon where Iranian terrorists and revolutionary guards are stationed.

Held by the radical Hezbollah, or Party of God, Buckley was tortured over a long period of time, the columnists reported. At one point, Buckley was taken to the town of Baalbek and repeatedly interrogated by Iranian revolutionary guards.

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One unidentified source was quoted as saying the CIA believed that Syrians identified Buckley as a CIA agent.

The columnists report that in March 1985 the Hezbollah arranged to transport Buckley to Iran because they feared he might be released by Syrian authorities.

Disguised as a wounded Iranian revolutionary guard, he was flown with several wounded Iranians on a Syrian helicopter to Damascus and put aboard an Iran Air jetliner to Tehran, the columnists said.

Tortured and interrogated in the basement of the Iranian Foreign Ministry in Tehran, Buckley required frequent medical treatment and was hospitalized at least once, the columists reported.

After an Iraqi bomb narrowly missed the suburban Tehran house where he was being kept, Buckley was taken to a revolutionary guard camp near the holy city of Qom. He suffered a heart attack there in mid-April and died that month in a Tehran hospital, the columnists reported.

Neither Kilburn nor Buckley was seen by the Rev. Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian minister who was released by the Islamic Jihad on Sept. 14 after 16 months of captivity.

Weir reported seeing the four other American hostages: Terry Anderson, Middle East correspondent for The Associated Press; the Rev. Lawrence Jenco, a Roman Catholic relief official; David Jacobsen, director of Beirut's American University Hospital; and Thomas Sutherland, the university's agriculture dean.

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